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THE MUSKET

Lexington High School's Student-run Newspaper — since 1969

Volume LI — Issue I — October 2008

August flood extends summer vacation

By Tim Kenny
Editor-in-Chief

During the week following the Labor Day weekend flooding of Lexington High School's basement, students, teachers, and town administrators responded with a broad range of emotions. While students looked forward to enjoying the final days of summer, those responsible for dealing with the 220,000 gallons of water that had swallowed up the entirety of the LHS basement faced a daunting challenge.

The first indication of the flooding emerged on Labor Day, when the Head Custodian, Ralph Paoletta, discovered a flight of stairs leading from the senior quad to the boiler room inundated with 7 feet of water. By then, the damage had been done; Patrick Goddard, the Director of Public Facilities, estimated that "the leak began sometime between Thursday night and Friday morning, and continued at about 40 gallons per minute for the rest of the weekend."

The leak originated from a stump that protruded out of the hot water heater, where the natural gas-fed burner attaches to the boiler, and where the heat is produced to heat the water.

Goddard explained that the leak was caused by three fractured bolts that held a gasket between the two flanges on the connecting ends of the two pipe sections—one attached to the burner, the other to the boiler. The flanges are the metal rings that come out perpendicularly from the pipe at the mating ends, where bolts are used to connect the two metal faces. The gasket is the compressible material, often made of rubber or cork, that keeps the seal between the two flanges tight. When the three bolts fractured, the gasket no longer completely sealed the two pipe sections together, causing the leak.

Staff photo by Tim Kenny

Workers haul damaged materials from the basement while LHS students enjoyed a day off.

The theory goes that over the thirteen-year lifespan of the boiler, the bolts sustained "microscopic fractures as the continuous exposure to alternating hot and cold water im-

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LHS' Cohen settling in as principal

By Noah Karr-Kaitin
Editor-in-Chief

With the advent of a biblical flood at Lexington High School, many students have put little thought into the monumental shift in leadership that LHS underwent this year. Natalie Cohen became the principal after several years with Dr. Michael Jones at the helm. Cohen brings to Lexington her years of experience as the former vice principal of Weston High School. There, Cohen earned a reputation for discipline, and, according to sources at Weston High School, was "tough but fair." Cohen's application for Principal of LHS stood head- and -shoulders above the competition, and the hiring committee jumped at the opportunity to offer her the position.

In making the transition from head of discipline to full executive in charge of the high school, Cohen's goals have shifted. From the time she began her tenure in July, there has been no sweeping overhaul of any disciplinary statutes, and all the changes that have been discussed have been in regards to the fundamental educational mindset at LHS.

Students could reasonably expect a new principal to come in with an allocated itinerary, but *The Musket* learned that it is not that simple. "I haven't come in with a preset agenda ... that's not my style," Cohen said.

> ***"I haven't come in with a preset agenda ... that's not my style."***
>
> *-Natalie Cohen, Principal*

Instead, Cohen has tried to increase her visibility around the school with plans to drop in on classes unannounced. "I'm not looking for a dog and pony show in these classrooms," she explaines, "I want to see what's really going on." The goal of this outreach is to "create a learning community." This policy of openness extends far and wide, as she said that "students can come to me with questions and concerns."

These students can expect to be listened to by someone whose executive philosophy is something entirely new at Lexington High School.

As principal of LHS Cohen is stepping into a position notorious for its bureaucratic tendencies. Rather than allowing her goals to be side-

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Lunch chair deficit a top admin. priority

By Hannah Galin
Features Editor

The hallway in the main building during a lunch block is filled with kids sitting on the floor, with their lunch trays and Saran-wrapped sandwiches. You may ask yourself why these students would choose to sit on the floor when there are chairs and tables in the two cafeterias.

Column

Well, you will quickly answer your own question when you walk into either Commons I or Commons II; at the beginning of school, there weren't enough chairs and tables.

Many students attest to the overcrowded lunch rooms and chair stealing that takes place because of the soon to be remedied chair shortage.

Get up to get a spoon from Commons Two and you better be prepared to stand up for the rest of lunch. Try to fit an extra person into one of the benches in Commons One and someone is bound to fall on the floor. Lunch time has become a competition rather than a time to relax.

But this imbalance between students and seating has not gone unnoticed by the school administration. Principal Natalie Cohen has taken on the lunch crisis as a top priority.

She and Head Custodian Ralph Paoletta have been in touch with the company that supplies the chairs, and they plan on ordering 250 new chairs. These new chairs will replace cracked ones that currently reside in a supply closet.

The question is, where will all these chairs go? While students have difficulty finding seats, many have an equally difficult time finding table space to pull a chair up to.

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Who are all these new teachers? A&E — Page 5 | Hoping new technology delivers big. Op/Ed — Page 3

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perceptibly expanded and contracted the bolts," Goddard said.

Goddard has been Director of Public Facilities for thirteen months, and is responsible for the schools and various town buildings, including the town hall, library, and the police and fire stations.

Servicemaster, a company that specializes in emergency response as well as a variety of other landscaping and custodial services, was tasked with pumping the water out of the basement and removing the multiple dumpsters worth of soaked wood shelves and supplies that were stored in the basement.

In total, eleven 21,000-gallon storage tanks were filled with water. For weeks, the storage tanks were grounded in the parking lot until the water was tested for contaminants.

Paoletta, who originally discovered the flooding, had reported a thin layer of oil on top of the flood water. Goddard explained that the oil was residual from fifteen years ago, when the school still had oil-fired boilers, and leached out of the concrete floor when the basement flooded.

Cohen ... said that students will have to make up the three days in June.

The tests came back negative for contaminants, and the water was subsequently drained into the sanitary manhole in the school parking lot.

Water sensors will be installed in the basement to alert school officials of flooding in the future. Goddard said that the town will also be testing the basement for mold in the coming weeks.

All electrical and telephone wires located in the basement were replaced as a result of the flood. The damaged electrical wires and components located in the basement were the primary reason for the school website downtime, as the electricity to the school was shut off until all the wires leading to the damaged equipment in the basement were disconnected.

The wood flooring in the orchestra pit in the auditorium was also damaged by the flooding.

Goddard explained that "water seeped through a concrete wall adjacent to the back wall of the orchestra pit, causing the wood to expand and the wood flooring to buckle."

New wood flooring has since been installed. Goddard also noted that about twenty stage lights stored under the stage were damaged, and will be replaced.

Natalie Cohen, the new principal at Lexington High School, said that students will have to make up the three missed days in June. However, seniors will not be affected because the graduation ceremonies and festivities have already been arranged.

Staff photo by Chris Alessandrini

Students who can't find seats in Commons I or II crowd benches in the quad.

SEATS cont. from **PAGE 1**

The administration has talked about getting portable tables, but the students would need to be responsible for putting them away at the end of lunch. If there is going to be any changes to seating options, the initiative for change will have to come from the students.

School administrators had a difficult time giving the exact number of students without seats at each lunch because the school counts on juniors and seniors exercising their open campus privileges.

Getting to and from the center with food in thirty minutes (and only twenty-five on Wednesdays) is often cutting it a little close. And not every junior and senior has a free block in the middle of the day to grab a bite, and many choose to bring lunch from home.

Everyone should have the option of sitting in the cafeteria, but that does not seem to be logistically possible.

When the school underwent renovations a few years ago, the cafeteria was redesigned to fit exactly the number of students there were at the time. Not surprisingly, class enrollment keeps on growing.

Anyone walking into the main building during lunch cannot help but notice the many students picnicking on the floor. 250 more chairs may solve this dilemma, but we will have to wait to find out.

In the meantime, many students say that they do not mind sitting on the floor; they just want to sit with their friends.

COHEN cont. from **PAGE 1**

lined, Cohen recognizes the challenges of her position. "It's easy to get swallowed up in meetings, but I will carve the time out of my schedule."

As an executive, Cohen does not just see herself as purely pragmatic, nor as exclusively visionary. Instead, she sees herself as a hybrid of the two, with overarching goals for the future LHS.

"Everyday is a learning experience here, and in that sense, being pragmatic about the situations that I find is absolutely necessary."

At the same time, Cohen talks readily about the "educational experience" and her long- and short-term goals to improve LHS.

With the flood, Cohen's operating philosophy was tested early on in her tenure. As she described it, "everything went wrong that could've."

One might expect Cohen to be phased by the experience of dealing with a catastrophic event in her first full school week as principal. It is this fact that makes her response to the flood all the more surprising.

"This was the most wonderful first impression a principal could have, of a group of people who see a difficulty and divide up the responsibilities and just calmly do them. It was an opportunity to freak out and nobody did."

These are the words of a new principal who is beginning to foster a new community at LHS.

Musket file photo

Cohen is the new principal at LHS.

THE MUSKET

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SATs new score reporting policy is a mixed bag

By Mia Karnofsky
News Editor

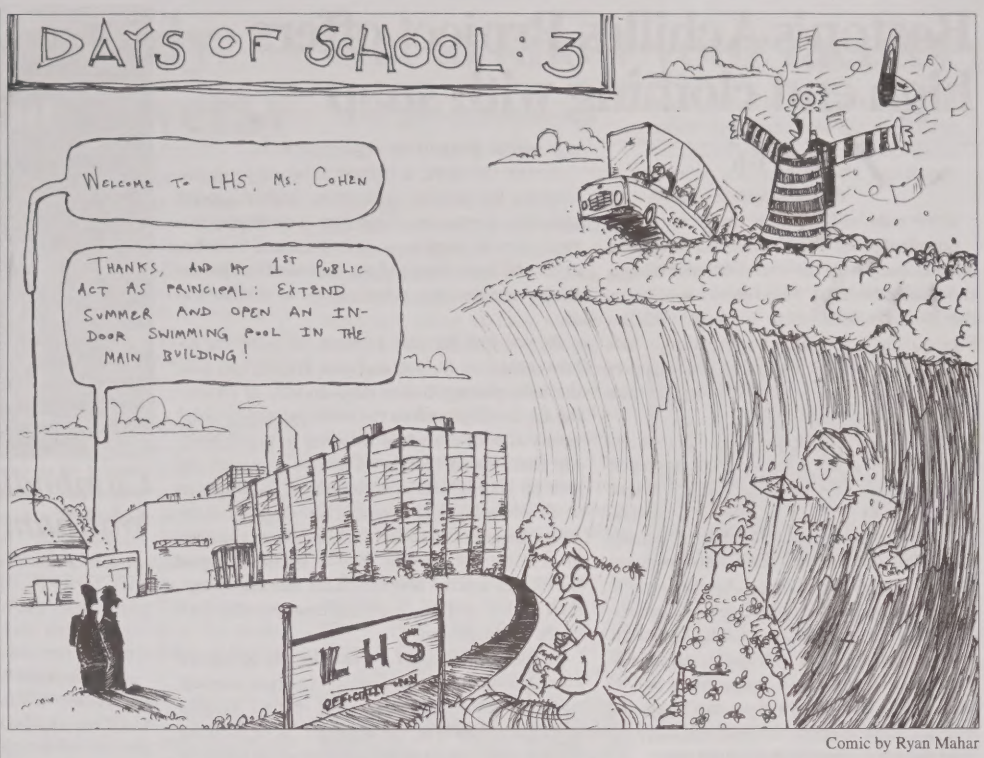
This summer, Collegeboard.com issued a new score reporting policy for all SAT tests. Effective in March 2009, students applying to college will be able to select, by date, which composite SAT scores they want sent. This applies to any test taken in the past or in the future. By approving this policy, which is already available with the ACT, the College Board hopes to "reduce student stress" caused by the testing and college application processes.

Of course, this seems to be an act of clemency for a lot of LHS students. Not only helping to increase the odds of admission, the change will bring solace and additional chances to the recipients of disappointing score reports. Many students will take advantage of the policy by hiding from admissions staff lower-than-expected scores. These new options will undoubtedly force colleges to rethink how they interpret SAT scores.

However, being able to choose to take the SATs more than a few times to improve results disadvantages low-income students. Choosing which scores to send is optional so students will still be able to send all their scores and show colleges that they have nothing to hide. Although a low score could hurt, admissions officers sometimes look only at applicants highest test scores. Still, this doesn't make up for the preparation and opportunity well-off students have to raise their scores. Fee waivers are only available for up to four tests, two for the $45 SAT and two for the $20 Subject Tests. This means that relatively affluent students who often already blow huge sums of cash on standardized testing classes will be able to pay to retake the test as often as they want. Meanwhile, their less wealthy classmates could be unfairly limited and stuck with only two score reports to send to colleges.

The College Board will gain a large profit increase as a result of the new guidelines. A USNews.com article cites the observations of the director of a group that checks for bias in standardized testing. He estimates that "if roughly 3 percent of the 1.5 million students who take the test annually took it just one additional time—so 50,000 tests—that would mean an extra $2.25 million for the College Board."

So not only is the College Board favoring already supported students with the new policy, it also seems to be a deliberate marketing move to compete with the ACT. If the money College Board gains from additional tests were put into scholarships for tutoring and more fee waivers, it would reduce unnecessary stress for students of all economic backgrounds. It is unethical for the company to institute a policy for its monetary benefit while doing nothing to support the high-school students who need already need financial help.


DAYS OF SCHOOL: 3
WELCOME TO LHS, MS. COHEN
THANKS, AND MY 1ST PUBLIC ACT AS PRINCIPAL: EXTEND SUMMER AND OPEN AN IN-DOOR SWIMMING POOL IN THE MAIN BUILDING!
LHS

Comic by Ryan Mahar

New X2 software may help redeem school's awful technology reputation

By Mark Chonofsky
Editorials Editor

Previous administrations have hardly succeeded in integrating LHS with technology. Two key programs, Rediker and FirstClass, have not performed well. The adoption of a new program, X2, offers LHS hope that its technology will improve.

Conflicting schedules or simply the lack of required courses are some of the complaints attributed to the failure of Rediker. Some guidance staff find the system very difficult to navigate, and the fact that the program is only available on PC computers just increases the complexity of its implementation.

Rediker does, however, have its proponents. "I love Rediker," says Melissa Buttaro, a guidance counselor. "I think it's great for what I use it for.... The problem, as we have learned over the years, is that it does not interface with our attendance and grading software." Anaces, Rediker's attendance-keeping component, has been an even larger failure. Its click-in attendance system has been disparaged by teachers and deans alike.

Teachers complained that Anaces was slow, and its interface, while smooth and user-friendly, took a long time to open on many of the school's computers. Attendance data was time-consuming to enter, especially with a large number of tardies or absences, and the server would break frequently, meaning that attendance would need to be entered by hand anyway.

Deans, moreover, disliked the fact that the click-in feature was prone to falsification or forgetfulness. It lead to unnecessarily complicated disciplinary work on their part. Adding to the technological setbacks was FirstClass, the schools communications software, which has been an almost unmitigated failure among students. It offers access via a client on one's home computer or online via a web application. Some students still cannot access it despite having submitted the necessary documentation.

The web application, upgraded over the summer, has gone from hardly functional to terribly slow. Though the interface did become nominally prettier, it remains hard to navigate.

The personal computer-based client is hardly better. "The desktop client won't work for me," says Kelly Miao, a junior. Even when it does work, a dearth of licenses causes the system to refuse connections, a phenomenon that is "constant at any reasonable hour of the day," according to Miao. "It happens really often and it's really annoying."

"FirstClass really isn't a system that I would use unless forced to do so," Miao elaborated. It is telling that no school clubs have updated their FirstClass conference page since 2007, opting instead for a common Gmail accounts or Facebook.

X2, the database software that the school is switching this year, offers hope for the future. It has several advantages: integrated scheduling, discipline, attendance, and grade modules. It is completely web-based, meaning that it can be accessed on any computer, and there is talk of giving accounts to students and their guardians, allowing the possibility of better participation and access for everyone.

As for communication, some have advocated a switch to Google Apps Education, Google's product for schools, which provides a cleaner interface and all the functionality of FirstClass at no cost.

This is not to say that the tech department, which nobly maintains our antediluvian computer infrastructure, has failed. Rather, we have been saddled with awful programs that often do not work. A movement to a more sensible software, such as X2 or Google Apps, will help bring us into the future.

"The desktop client won't work for me ... It happens really often and it's really annoying."

-Kelly Miao, Junior

Love us? Hate us? Write us.

Send your letters to
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Boston's Achilles Project offers high end clothing with snap

By Alec Yeh
Senate Editor

Surrounded by brick office buildings and minutes away from the waterfront pier, a high-end fashion boutique would seem out of place. But lo and behold, there it stands, Achilles Project, where clothing is art displayed in mobile frosted-glass panels and where shoppers are art connoisseurs looking to complete their collections.

Located down the street from South Station, Achilles Project opened last spring, hoping to become a new Boston hotspot. The boutique was opened by Michael Krupp, an ex-Manhattan real estate developer, and Shaka Ramsay, a local fashion guru who has worked for stores like The Tannery and Diesel. Achilles encompasses designer brands like Opening Ceremony, Maharishi, and McQ Alexander McQueen, many of which use eco-friendly, sustainable material. Clothing can range from $40 to well over $1,500, though if you are lucky, you may just stumble upon a half-off sale since the store does not advertise their discounts.

Regardless of the price, the money is well spent because a share of the profit from the sale of Lutz & Patmos items is donated to Al Gore's "Save the Earth" program. In addition, Achilles' tags are created locally. Artists for Humanities, a non-profit organization for Boston's youth, is designing Achilles' new original line of clothing.

Kids from the organization will be able to create their own limited edition tags and proceeds from all apparel with those hand-made tags will be given to the organization.

Across the store, a lighted jewel case accommodates the sneaker collections, leather apparel and other accessories. Each item is on display in a single size so employees sprint back and forth between the main floor and the basement stockroom whenever necessary to fetch larger or smaller sizes.

As you wait for your personal consultant to return with your fit, you and your friends can pass the time playing Guitar Hero or Wii, or observing the art displayed on the walls painted by local artists and all the while listening to music blasting from the DJ booth. You can even surf the web on your iPhone or laptop thanks to the open WiFi network. Since boredom is unheard of in the store, the only deterrent from shopping is hunger. To remedy that, all you need to do is walk past the clothes and the boutique fades into the lounge, then the bar, and finally Persephone, the other half of the establishment.

Headed by Michael Leviton, a locally acclaimed chef, Persephone is a modern America-inspired, high-end restaurant that offers entrees ranging from $10 at lunch, to $29 at dinner. With plenty of seating available at either cafeteria-style tables or at the bar, walk-ins are always welcome. Aiming to support local markets, the restaurant only buys produce from local establishments. Persephone tries its very best to stay environmentally friendly by using napkins made without cutting down trees and by hiring a company to dispose of their kitchen grease in an eco-friendly way.

Though their prices are not likely to be within most high schooler's budget, the experience itself is well worth the trip. For more information, visit http://achilles-project.com/

Trying to decipher the a capella enigma at LHS

By Kiran Mani
Staff Writer

As audition time approaches, more and more students pass in and out of room 133 with their hands on an a cappella packet. Anxiety and anticipation seem to besiege the room. Questions of uncertainty swirl in the minds of those auditioning. The upperclassmen, many of whom have already established themselves in the music department, recognize the clique-like environment within many groups and wonder which one they would best fit into. Then, there are the freshmen, some of whom have come to LHS after finding themselves among the top of their middle school choirs. Suddenly, they find themselves deflated by the talent of older kids, and struggle to make it into the system like a group of teens trying to squeeze their way into the front of a rock concert. Each of them wonders: Am I really good enough? Is it worth the trouble of going through all this anxiety?

Last year, I auditioned for two groups and was accepted into one. I spent almost half a year believing that the reason I got into only one of them was because I was a mediocre singer. But when I look back, I realize how much I underestimated the importance and validity of group dynamics that proves to be a large factor during the selection process and beyond. Because the a cappella program is student-run, the interactions between the members of the group are all the more crucial. More often than not, the rejection stems from the realization that someone's personality would be better suited for another group. I, for one, know now that, given my personality, I could not have been happier in any other group. Many of the groups can, in fact, be a little "exclusive." So for those who are auditioning for the first time this year, there is more to getting accepted than just your voice.

I guess I was lucky that I was an oblivious freshman when I tried out for a cappella, because, had I known everything, I would never have found the courage to audition. I'm an only child, so I didn't have an older sister to clue me in on what to do, and I had no idea about the bias people had toward freshmen. I remember nervously walking into auditions—so much of me believed that if I only sang to my potential in the audition and did not goof up, I'd definitely get in. But the truth is that despite the talent, there will be some underclassmen who will not be accepted into a group of their choice, just because they are underclassmen. They may have to wait their turn.

With auditions approaching this year I once again have the anxiety and worries that I had last year, albeit for different reasons. This time, I will be holding auditions, and I fear that that there won't be enough girls who come to try out. How will the girls who don't make it feel? Mostly, I worry for the freshmen: the freshmen girls and even the sophomores who don't want to audition because they think they're not good enough to be in a cappella, or because they think the upperclassmen hate them. These are the girls that I want to speak to, and I want them to know that these thoughts shouldn't discourage them from auditioning. There may be groups

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Cambodia meets France at Waltham's Elephant Walk

By Michelle Ho
A&E Editor

The Elephant Walk is renown for its unique and delectable fusion of Cambodian and French cuisine. The restaurant has three locations in the Greater Boston area. I had the pleasure of dining at the Waltham spot. The atmosphere of the dining area is dark and muted with photographs and elephant-themed artwork adorning the walls. The candlelit tables set the dinner date mood, but the prices on the menu imply impressive and expensive dinner date. Unless you speak French or Cambodian, the menu items are difficult to pronounce or understand. Conveniently, the descriptions that complement each dish provide detailed, mouth-watering translations.

Review

I selected from the four course prix-fixe tasting menu, which includes a starter, two main dishes and a dessert. My meal began with Rouleaux, Cambodian spring rolls filled with ground pork, crushed peanut, beanthread, carrot and onion. The crispy wrapper contrasted with the texture of the moist filling. The tuk trey dipping sauce was similar to soy sauce with a kick of vinegar and subtle peanut. My second course featured sesame-ginger glazed St. Louis ribs over wild lime rice with cucumber-ginger pickles. The ribs were succulent, the meat slid right off the bone, and the cucumber-ginger pickles added a sour spark, but the lime flavored rice, while a neat idea, tasted out of place on this dish. My last course before dessert was the Crevettes Malika, or shrimp sautéed in lemongrass, shallots and garlic with cubanelle peppers, plum tomato, jalapeños and Asian basil.

"I think that every dish is worth the professional service, upscale atmosphere, presentation and quality of the food."

The dish could easily have been overwhelmed by the spices, but the sweet tomatoes and aromatic basil kept it in check. My whole meal was finished off with a slice of rich chocolate truffle cake drizzled with raspberry sauce and a cup of hot, frothy Cambodian tea. Needless to say, I was thoroughly satisfied with my meal. Every course was unique, well-crafted and representative of the bold tastes of Cambodian and French quizine.

Although some items on the menu reach in the pricey range, I think that every dish is worth the professional service, upscale atmosphere, presentation and quality of the food. I recommend the Elephant Walk for vegetarians, Asian fusion food lovers and seasoned diners looking to try a new, bold taste.

Fall musical already stirring up controversy

By Abha Gallewale
Editor-in-Chief

Preview

As the bell rings, signaling the end of Z Block, a small group of students gathers in the auditorium, alert and ready for rehearsal. While most kids hurry home after a tiring day of school, these actors are just embarking on the long afternoon of work that awaits.

This fall, LHS' Drama and Music Departments are planning to perform *Assassins*, a musical that centers on a group of people who attempt to assassinate American presidents. And although Stephen Sondheim's music is catchy and his lyrics are witty, the Tony Award-winning musical is not appreciated by all in the LHS community.

As auditions conclude and eager, young freshmen hastily push and shove in order to catch a glimpse of the callback list, the veteran seniors hang back and casually glance at the piece of paper tacked to the wall, secretly just as impatient as the underclassmen.

Although they were thrilled to see their names next to the lead roles, the upperclassmen were not all excited when finding out the choice of the 2008 musical. After all, many of them had dedicated their autumns to *Seussical*, *Evita*, and *Les Miserables* rehearsals for the past three years. The choice of a relatively new and controversial musical seemed anticlimactic, somehow.

Although the musical is fitting for an election year, certain precautions have to be taken because of the surprising choice. Many Lexington residents who typically attend the musical's performances bring their children along each year; this production's plot, however, may be unsuitable for toddlers and young kids. Even some adults do not approve of the musical, believing it to be a piece of dark humor gone too far.

Whatever the public opinion, this production promises to be unforgettable as usual, with its elaborate set, versatile actors, and hard-working pit orchestra. Remake sure to catch *Assassins* this November 20-22. We guarantee it will have you talking.

Catch a Flick at your local theater

By Chris Herndon
Staff Writer

After months of unappealing films such as *Mamma Mia!*, *Sex and the City*, and a pitiful presentation of the IMAX-necessary *The Dark Knight*, the Lexington FLiCK finally has a film worth seeing: *Burn After Reading*. Arriving at the FLiCK on the night of its premier, *Burn After Reading* is an important turning point for the theater both in the quality of the film and in the draw of an opening-night show.

Musket file photo

Burn After Reading is director-writer duo Joel and Ethan Coen's return to farce, following their brief foray into dead-serious evil-contemplation with 2007's Best Picture *No Country for Old Men*. There is violence, betrayal, and a bad hairdo, but beyond that, the Coen brothers have moved in a comedic direction reminiscent of some of their earlier efforts such as *Raising Arizona* (1987) and *Fargo* (1996). *Burn After Reading* is the story of an attempted blackmail at the hands of two idiotic gym attendants, Linda Litzke (Frances McDormand) and Chad Feldheimer (Brad Pitt). Their target is former CIA analyst Osbourne Cox, played by occasional FLiCK patron John Malkovich. Litzke, Feldheimer, and Cox have no idea how little information is really at stake, and each is tries to outsmart the others. All the while, Federal Treasury agent Harry Pfarrer (George Clooney) is sleeping with Cox's wife Katie (Tilda Swinton) and Litzke. Despite the set up for a plot-driven spy movie, the film's value is not in the story, but in the overblown caricatures that smash into one another throughout the film.

Every character is a cardboard cutout, set up only to be gleefully destroyed by the Coen brothers.

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Get to know your faculty

By Hannah Rosenberg
Features Editor

Students at Lexington High School may find it hard to think of their teachers involved in anything outside of education. Teachers come to school, assign homework, grade papers, and seemingly cease to exist outside of their job. In order to bridge the gap between students and teachers while getting to know the new staff, we sent out a survey to the new faculty at LHS and asked them about their lives outside teaching. As students read this, they may be surprised to find that their own interests are compatible with some of the teachers'. Here is a sampling of the many responses we received.

Mr. Horesh is a new earth science teacher. He moved to Lexington from upstate New York in order to live closer to his fiancée. He loves hiking, camping, biking, running, cooking

and spending time with his dog, Sadie. Whenever he needs to relax, he plays music and works on pencil drawings. He also enjoys playing the guitar and eating Mediterranean food (his favorite is hummus). His all time favorite movie is The Blues Brothers. He has diverse tastes in music, such as jazz, folk, rock and even classical. In addition to his love of science, he has a secret love for world history, and likes books that highlight specific civilizations and cultures.

Ms. Tremaine is a new United States history teacher. She was intrigued by Lexington High School because of its reputation for curious students and excellent teachers. She loves running and spends her time training with friends. Another one of her hobbies is taking photographs and making scrapbooks

documenting her fun activities. This summer she drove across the country with her brother and one of her cousins, and was lucky to see the Grand Canyon, Arches National Park, and the California coast. Her favorite movie is *Love Actually* because of its different plotlines that weave together and fit perfectly. Her favorite television shows are *Grey's Anatomy*, *NCIS*, and *Brothers and Sisters*.

Ms. Shea is a new freshman world history teacher. She used to teach seventh grade world geography at Diamond Middle School and is excited to reconnect with her former students at

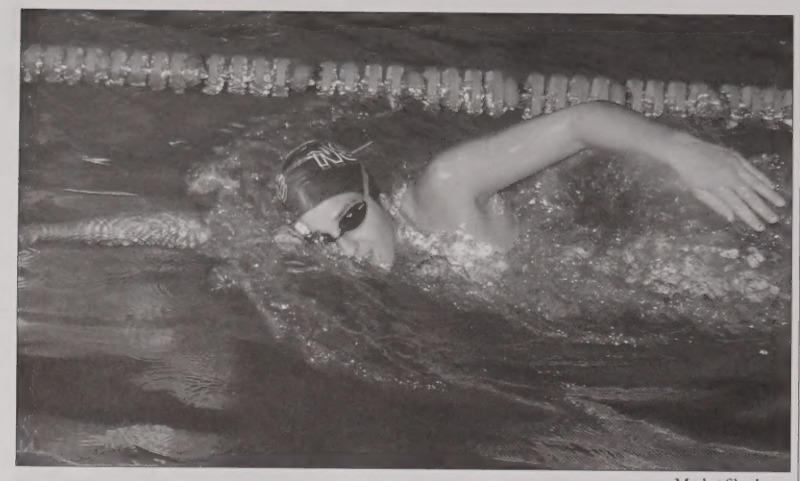
Lexington High School. She is a huge Red Sox fan and when asked about her favorite TV shows she admits, "At this time of year it's pretty much all Red Sox, all the time." She also enjoys *Lost*, *The Daily Show* and *24*. She also loves to read *Harry Potter* and was ecstatic when J.K. Rowling was the speaker at her Harvard Graduation in June. She reads fiction and nonfiction (especially history).

Ms. Anderson is a new librarian who came to Lexington after finishing graduate school at Simmons and

working at an office in Falmouth, Maine. She enjoys any foods that contain cheese, garlic or chocolate. She loves crime stories and "true" ghost stories, and enjoys watching movies and reading books about these topics. She encourages students to tell her if they have ever experienced a haunting or have seen a ghost! Currently on her iPhone are artists such as The Shins, The Clash, Aretha Franklin, Johnny Cash and The Beastie Boys. She loves TV shows such as The Office and 30 Rock. She would also like to remind students that no food or drinks are allowed in the library!

The teachers at Lexington High School have diverse interests in their lives outside of their jobs. While they enjoy teaching, they also love music, television, reading, traveling and having fun. It is surprising to know that the interests of students and teachers can be so similar. Thank you to the all teachers that responded to our questionnaire.

Remember to recycle your Musket, and tip your waitresses



Musket file photo
Amy O'Brien (senior) swims the free-style in one her numerous practices during a week.

LHSs own superstar swimmer a force to be reckoned with

By Jacob Friedman
Sports Editor

When people talk about superstar athletes, the general expectation is that they are refering to an athlete who plays one of the four major sports: basketball, football, baseball, or soccer. Those tend to be the four sports that attract the most fans and therefore the most attention. However, one of Lexington High School's most accomplished athlete competes in none of those four sports. Lexington High School's most decorated athlete is a swimmer.

Allow me to introduce Amy O'Brien, state champion in the 50 meter freestyle three years running. O'Brien, who has now been swimming for thirteen years, has been swimming at U.S. sectionals for the past four. U.S. sectionals is the fifth highest level of competition in the swimming world, behind only junior nationals, nationals, worlds, and of course the Olympics.

Along with the 50 meter freestyle, O'Brien also swims the 100 meter freestyle and the 100 meter butterfly (better known as the fly). Her best time in the 50 meter freestyle is 24.22 seconds; in the 100 meter freestyle, 53.32 seconds; in the 100 meter fly, 58.03 seconds.

For comparison, Lisbeth Trickett of Australia won gold at the 2008 Beijing Olympics with a time of 56.73 seconds in the 100 meter fly. The top U.S. time was Christine Magnuson's 57.10 seconds. The sixth place time 58.06 seconds. O'Brien's best time is 58.03 seconds.

In the women's 100 meter freestyle at the 2008 Beijing Olympics 53.12 seconds was the gold medal and Olympic record setting time (once again by Britta Steffen). The top American swimmer was Natalie Coughlin with a time of 53.39 seconds which earned her the Bronze medal. O'Brien's best time is 53.32 seconds.

In the 2008 Beijing Olympics, 24.06 seconds in the women's 50 meter freestyle won gold and set an Olympic record (set by Britta Steffen of Germany). The fastest time by a United States swimmer was Dara Torres' 24.07 seconds. Fourth place in the 50 meter freestyle was 24.25 seconds and the second best time by a U.S. swimmer was Kara Lynn Joyce's 24.63 seconds. O'Brien's best time in the 50 meter freestyle is 24.22 seconds.

Of her 13 years swimming, O'Brien has swum for North Shore Swim Club for 12 of those years. She swims every day, whether it's a practice or a meet for the high school team, including at North Shore on Saturdays. It is safe to assume that O'Brien spends more time in the pool than any athlete of any sport does on their respective field or court.

Although it is a rare occurrence that O'Brien has to miss school for swimming, she is almost always tired and rarely has enough time at home to complete her homework. Almost as impressive as her swimming accomplishments is her ability to maintain her place as a strong student despite her lack of free time.

O'Brien's current primary goal is Junior Nationals, but she will continue to swim for the high school and North Shore for now. Hopefully, this fall she will bring home her fourth straight state title in the 50 meter freestyle. While O'Brien makes it clear that she takes it meet by meet, she does admit that the London 2012 Olympics looms in the back of her mind as her "big goal."

Offbeat Athlete: Student's fencing a true form of art

By Samantha Jacob
Sports Editor

There are sports — and then there is fencing. Originating from ancient Egypt, some consider fencing not just a sport, but a form of art. Most students imagine fencing to be one of the unique and intriguing gym classes offered by the high school, yet there are students who study fencing outside of the confines of the Field House.

Egan Muir, a junior at LHS, discovered his interest in fencing during his quest to try an unusual sport. Rather than participating in the usual sports that are offered at the high school, Muir picked up fencing. Since the sixth grade, he has gone to the Boston Fencing Club in Waltham to pursue his interest in the offbeat sport.

Muir explaines how a regular day at the Boston Fencing Club includes "conditioning, footwork, blade handling, and then practice bouts".

Although the sport is thousands of years old, it has changed along with the technological advances of our time. At the Boston Fencing Club, the bouts, or fights, are "electric, which means wires connect each fencer to a machine, which will then signal when a 'touch,' or point is scored." The use of electric bouts makes scoring easier, and settles disputes and judgment calls.

The instructional gym class taught at school covers basic techniques, including maneuvers listed in the Program of Studies, such as "salute, on guard, advance, retreat, beat, disengage, thrust, lunge, [and] four parries". After learning the primary skills, students then move on to beginning bouts and judging fellow peers' fights. Students also learn the different parts of the foil, which is the type of fencing sword used to teach at the school. Other swords include the "epee" and the "saber", each of which has distinctive handles and blades.

At the end of the quarter, students are assessed on their comprehension of the fencing class's basic teaching principles. Muir, who has been fencing fot five years, believes the gym class "is a great way to try fencing", whether it be to get gym credits or to expand on one's athletic boundaries.

The playing field for fencing, "the strip," is a narrow mat that is forty-six feet long and six feet and seven inches wide. There are two fencers that spar, and usually three judges that evaluate the bout. Appropriate attire includes a full head-and-face mask, a jacket or vest, the foil, and, if necessary, gloves.

Muir said he thinks it would be "a really interesting sport" if it were offered by the school as a school sports team.

He mentioned how "everyone at a competition will be really intense during their bout, but almost everyone is a nice kid off the strip." Fencing, just like most other sports, forces athletes to put on their game face and play or, in this case, bout, their best.

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These immensely entertaining caricatures nonetheless leave the viewer feeling a lack of meaningful empathetic connection to the characters. Clooney, Pitt, and McDormand each play a role in, as Cox puts it, "a league of morons." Clooney's Harry Pfarrar is a hyper-energetic womanizer who can't seem to get his food allergies straight (he has "lactose reflux" and can't eat "shellfood"), McDormand's Linda Litzke is pathetically obsessed with plastic surgery, and Pitt's Chad Feldheimer is constantly and vigorously chewing gum, dancing to his iPod, and laughing obnoxiously.

Malkovich's Osbourne Cox is so constantly furious at, as he puts it, "the morons I've been fighting all of my life," that any potential feelings of sympathy for his plight are replaced by a reaction of laughter and wonder at his irate outbursts. These are not characters that one can empathize with, yet they are characters that one can enjoy watching bumble dangerously around. There is an element of misanthropy and sadism on the part of the Coen brothers, and on the part of viewers who enjoy their brand of humor. As in 1996's *Fargo*, the film's draw is in the audience's morbid fascination with seeing characters' plans go wrong. If you're not into schadenfreude, then *Burn After Reading* may not be your thing, but you'll find the film's farcical characters far easier to laugh at than William H. Macy's gut-wrenching Jerry Lundegaard in *Fargo*.

SING cont. from **Page 4**

that will say, "Wait a year or two." But there may also be ensembles that are more than happy to accept them—even if they are a little awkward.

Being in the a cappella program was the highlight of my freshman year, and I feel blessed to have had the opportunity to work with such talented singers.

It truly has been a remarkable experience.

Got an idea?
Got beef?
Let's hear it.

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